

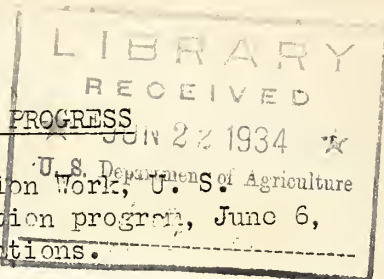
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HOME DEMONSTRATION WORK CONTRIBUTES TO AGRICULTURAL PROGRESS



A radio talk by C. W. Warburton, Director of Extension Work, U. S. Department of Agriculture, delivered in the Home Demonstration program, June 6, 1934, and broadcast by a network of associate NBC radio stations.

Twenty years ago Congress passed a bill establishing the Extension Service in Agriculture and Home Economics. Home Demonstration work, relating to the farm home, began shortly after the bill was passed, in 1914. Now we have sixteen hundred and twenty-six home demonstration agents, in forty-eight States, Alaska, and Hawaii. Working with these agents are thirty-five thousand home demonstration groups of farm women.

Behind these cold statistics there is the story of a revolution in rural homemaking. To contrast the old with the new, let me read you what Abigail Foote, a farm woman of Connecticut, wrote in her diary in the year 1775, a story of what her hands and fingers had done in one day:

"Fix'd gown for Prude, mended mother's ridinghood, Spun short thread, Fix'd two gowns for Walsh's girls, Carded tow, Spun linen, Worked on Cheese basket, Hatchel'd flax with Hannah, we did fifty-one pounds apiece, Pleated and ironed, Read a sermon of Doddridge's, Milked the Cows, Spun linen, did fifty knots, Made a broom of Guinea wheat straw, Spun thread to whiten, Set a red dye, Had two scholars from Mrs. Taylor's, Spun harness twine, Scoured the Pewter."

The world has changed since the time of Abigail Foote, and we are living in a scientific age of ultra-violet rays, vitamins, and cooperative ventures.

But the farm home still is the cornerstone of our rural civilization. The farmer's wife is largely responsible for the standard of living in rural families. Home Demonstration agents fit into this scientific age by helping farm women keep up with new discoveries that affect homemaking. For example, the Home demonstration agent applies the latest scientific findings about vitamins to diet -- to three meals a day. She talks about well-balanced meals in terms of vegetables and fruit and milk and butter. Many farm families, sometimes with very little cash, have maintained a good standard of health the past few years, by the maximum use of their own garden, orchard, and dairy products.

If there is a surplus, the Extension Service shows farm women how to market it. A farm market just outside Washington, D.C., run entirely by women, did a hundred thousand dollar business last year. Cash earned by such cooperative projects keeps children in school, pays taxes, buys clothing and home equipment. By opening up new avenues of income, the Extension Service helps the farm family to keep its standard of living from going too low, in times of stress.

Home improvement is another phase of Extension work. Home Demonstration workers teach farm women how to improve their homes with the materials at hand -- how to keep their homes clean and healthful, - make them convenient, and attractive. Other women make tours of these remodeled homes, and thus the influence of the Extension Service spreads.

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In home demonstration work, the group is the unit. Seven hundred and fifty thousand women are now enrolled in these groups. Those too busy to attend meetings learn up-to-date ways of doing things through special news articles and letters.

Local home demonstration leaders contribute much to the extension program. After taking special training from extension workers, they may teach their local groups. Last year more than one hundred and twenty five thousand women leaders helped to forward the home demonstration program, giving generously of time and effort. Extension efforts were thus multiplied many times, for there were just about one hundred times as many voluntary workers as employed home demonstration agents.

There is a social aspect to the group meeting: everybody takes part in music and recreation. The community interest developed leads to local improvements in schools, churches, and health facilities. Home demonstration group members attend not only their own community meetings, but also county-wide achievement days, farm women's camps, and short courses at the State Colleges. Thus they enlarge their outlook and gain a better understanding of national and international problems. Three-fourths of a million women, working in small groups, are developing a spirit of cooperation that will help to solve the problems of agriculture.

Home Demonstration agents have had an important part in helping the homemakers of the country meet the changing economic conditions of the last few months. They have worked with local relief agencies, in planning low-cost diets; they have encouraged home gardening, conducted food-canning demonstrations, and helped plan emergency budgets. They have directed activities which helped keep families off the relief rolls, and they have supported the live-at-home program. In every way possible, they are helping to keep up the farm standard of living, and maintain the morale of the farm family. Perhaps the Extension Service is coming of age just at the time we need it most.

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